

**An Evaluation of the Effectiveness of the Business  
Simulation Course at Payap University**

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**A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the  
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education**

**Faculty of Education  
Launceston, University of Tasmania**

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## **DECLARATION**

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## ABSTRACT

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Recent educational reform in Thailand has recognised the importance of a student-centred approach to learning. This change of emphasis reflects a global trend to prepare high level graduates who can meet the present and future needs of communities in general and of business in particular. By meeting the challenges presented by globalisation, Thai universities can grow and thrive in a new economic era, which is characterised by constant change and ever-increasing educational demands. Courses which prepare students to meet the practical demands of the workplace are being introduced in universities worldwide. To test whether experiential learning is practicable in a university learning environment, a Business Simulation Course (BSC) at Payap University was evaluated. The course is intended to facilitate business students' learning, by integrating theory with practice, which involves students working in 'real-life' business contexts.

The study data were collected from three sample groups of stakeholders. Stakeholders sampled included: BSC students, staff members at Payap University and non-university respondents who included villager leaders, parents of students, suppliers and policy-makers. Eighty respondents were surveyed by questionnaire, and 20 respondents were interviewed. The data were collected during the second semester of the 2003 academic year. Quantitative and qualitative analyses of the data were undertaken, in addition to a review of relevant literature. In this study, a 'grounded theory' approach used the modified 'Constant Comparative Method' as a means of both data collection and data analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1998b).

The findings of the study indicated that the course is an effective means of linking theory with practice by experiential learning. Stakeholders expressed the view that practical courses such as the BSC helped students to develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills and gave them the necessary experience to work co-operatively in a 'real' business world. However, non-university stakeholders were more in agreement with this point than students and staff. The data also indicated that students tended to prefer classroom learning by case study to learning-by-doing in a

'bona fide' business setting. The reasons given for this were that stress levels were higher for students in experiential learning, largely due to the extra demands on their time and the added pressure of teamwork. In addition, increased resourcing of the course was seen as necessary to produce more effective teaching and learning outcomes in the BSC. The data also indicated that stakeholders believed that working in the community context is an important focus of the university because each institution is part of a unique local community. Also, all stakeholders recognised that business ethics are an important aspect of business life, which should be incorporated in the curriculum. However, students, staff and non-university stakeholders all agreed that learning in a simulated business environment is useful for future employment, because it allows students to experience 'real-life' business problems and develop solutions to them.

Thus the study provides valuable feedback from stakeholders in the BSC. This is useful as part of the process of improving curriculum design as it closes the loop between purpose —implementation — review of the course. This feedback enables faculty staff at Payap University responsible for curriculum design and implementation to refine their activities in courses such as the BSC. Feedback is also provided in the term of useful practical and theoretical advice to the university sector. Finally, policy-makers senior bureaucrats and high level administrators in government will also benefit from the insights provided by this study.

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# CONTENTS

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DECLARATION.....	ii
PERMISSION TO COPY .....	iii
ABSTRACT .....	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	vi
CONTENTS .....	viii
LIST OF TABLES .....	xii
LIST OF FIGURES.....	xiii
GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	xiv
Chapter 1 .....	1
BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT OF THE STUDY .....	1
Introduction .....	1
1.1 Recent Changes in Higher Education in the Global Context .....	2
Higher Education Change in Europe and Central Asian Countries .....	3
1.1.1 Mass Access to Higher Education.....	5
1.1.2 Innovative Pedagogical Approaches and Curriculum Design.....	7
1.2 The Context of Change in Thai Higher Education.....	8
1.2.1 Government Responses to the Need for Change in Thai Higher Education.....	8
1.2.2 Combining Theory with Practice in Thai Higher Education.....	9
1.2.3 Quality and Quality Assurance in Thai Higher Education.....	11
1.2.4 The Context of Curriculum Design: The Vision and Mission of Payap University .....	12
1.2.5 The Context of Teaching and Learning in the Business Simulation Course (BSC) at Payap University.....	13
1.2.6 Brief Description of the BSC at Payap University.....	15
1.2.7 The BSC's Teaching Method: Simulation-Based Approach Versus Real-life Approach.....	18
1.3 Purpose of the Study.....	19
1.3.1 Objectives of the Study .....	20
1.4 Research Questions .....	21
1.5 Contributions of the Study .....	23
1.6 Limitations of the Study .....	24
1.7 Permission to Undertake the Study .....	25
1.8 Structure of the Thesis.....	25
Summary .....	25
Chapter 2 .....	27
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE.....	27
Introduction .....	27
2.1 Stakeholders' Perceptions - Equipping Students for Business .....	28
2.1.1 Simulated Learning .....	28
2.1.2 New Teaching Approaches in Higher Education Relevant to Simulated Learning.....	31
Changes in Approaches to Teaching in Higher Education.....	32
A Paradigm Shift from Teaching to Learning in Thai Instructors' Perspective.....	32



The Suitability of Simulated or Experiential Learning for Adult Learners	33
Independent Learning (Autonomous Learning)	34
Problem-Based Learning (PBL)	35
Co-Operative Learning/ Teamwork	37
2.1.3 Curriculum Issues Related to Real-Life Contexts	40
Curriculum Development or Design Models	41
Curriculum Evaluation	42
Business Curricula	43
Authentic Assessment	44
2.2 Stakeholders' Perceptions: Applying Theory in Practice	47
2.2.1 Transfer of Learning: From Theory to Practice	47
2.2.2 Alternative Approaches to Curriculum Construction: Applying Theory in Practice	49
2.3 Preparing Students for the World of Work	51
2.3.1 Community-Based Learning	52
2.3.2 The Sense of Community and Commitment to Altruism	53
2.3.3 Curriculum to Achieve the Goals and Purpose of Community Stakeholders	54
2.4 Stakeholders' Advice	56
2.4.1 Curriculum Design in Higher Education	58
2.4.2 A Local Focus for Curriculum Implementation	58
2.4.3 Business Ethics	59
2.4.4 A Pedagogy for Higher Education	60
Summary	62
Chapter 3	63
METHODOLOGY	63
Introduction	63
3.1 The Selection of the Research Approach	63
3.1.1 Issues of Trustworthiness and Authenticity in Qualitative Research	65
3.1.2 Triangulation in Qualitative Research	66
3.2 Data Gathering Approaches and Instruments	67
3.2.1 Documents	67
3.2.2 Questionnaires	68
3.2.3 Interviews	71
3.3 Selection of the Sample	72
3.3.1 Purposive Sampling	73
3.3.2 Random Sampling	73
3.3.3 Opportunity Sampling	74
3.4 Developmental Phases of the Research Methodology	77
3.4.1 Ethics Application	77
3.4.2 Development of the Data Gathering Research Instruments and Methods	77
Research Instruments	77
3.4.3 Data Gathering Time-Line	81
3.4.4 Pilot Study	82
3.5 Data Analysis	82
3.5.1 Analysis of the Document Data	84
3.5.2 Analysis of the Questionnaire Data	84
3.5.3 Analysis of the Interview Data	86
3.6 Confidentiality and Security	90
Summary	90
Chapter 4	92

RESULTS.....	92
Introduction .....	92
4.1 Data Related to Research Questions.....	93
4.1.1 Stakeholders' Perceptions - Equipping Students for Business .....	94
4.1.1.1 Factors Which Stakeholders Perceive Cause Stress for Students in the BSC.....	97
4.1.1.2 Stakeholders' Perceptions of the Major Skills Gained in the Business Simulation Course .....	101
4.1.1.3 Stakeholders' Perceptions of the Main Features of the Business Simulation Course .....	104
4.1.2 Stakeholders' Perceptions: Applying Theory in Practice .....	110
4.1.2.1 Students' Application of Theory to Practice in the BSC .....	113
4.1.2.2 Strengths and Weaknesses of the BSC.....	116
4.1.3 Preparing Students for the World of Work .....	119
4.1.3.1 How the BSC Prepares Students to Work with the Community ..	121
4.1.3.2 Benefits of Students' Activities in the BSC to the Community....	123
4.1.3.3 Students Have a Sense of Belonging and Commitment to the Community .....	127
4.1.4 Stakeholders' Advice to the University .....	129
4.1.4.1 The advice to administrators of Payap University to support the BSC .....	131
4.1.5 Stakeholders' Advice to Policy Makers.....	135
4.1.5.1 Advice to Policy Makers to Support the BSC.....	136
4.2 Data from Open-ended Questions .....	140
4.2.1 What are the Three Best Things About the BSC?.....	140
4.2.2 If You Were Able to Change Anything About the BSC to Improve the Course, What Would You Change? .....	142
4.2.3 What Other Aspects of the BSC Do You Feel Are Important to This Evaluation? .....	145
4.2.4 Other Issues (Advisors, Transparency, Financial and Business Ethics) .....	147
Chapter 5 .....	150
DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS.....	150
Introduction .....	150
5.1 Research Questions .....	150
5.1.1 Stakeholders' Perceptions - Equipping Students for Business .....	150
5.1.1.1 Simulated Learning .....	151
5.1.1.2 The Importance of Relevant Curriculum Planning and Evaluation Models in Experiential Learning.....	158
5.1.2 Stakeholders' Perceptions: Applying Theory in Practice .....	163
5.1.2.1 Bridging Theory with Practice .....	164
5.1.2.2 Curriculum Construction: Experiential Learning / Learning by Doing .....	165
5.1.3 Preparing Students for the World of Work .....	168
5.1.3.1 Community Contexts and Students' Contribution to Community	168
5.1.3.2 The BSC Promotes and Fosters Reciprocity .....	171
5.1.3.3 Curriculum to Achieve the Goals and Purpose of Community Stakeholders .....	173
5.1.4 Stakeholders' Advice to the University .....	176
5.1.5 Stakeholders' Advice to Policy Makers.....	185
Suggestions for Further Research.....	188
Conclusion.....	189

REFERENCES .....	191
APPENDICES .....	204
APPENDIX I .....	205
Application Approval .....	206
Information Sheet .....	207
APPENDIX II .....	211
THE QUESTIONNAIRE .....	211
Student Questionnaire .....	212
Student Questionnaire .....	213
Staff Questionnaire .....	215
Non-University Questionnaire .....	216
APPENDIX III .....	222
INTERVIEW SCHEDULE .....	222
Interview Guide .....	223
Interview Questions .....	224
Sample of Interview Transcripts .....	226
Student .....	227
Staff .....	239
Non-University Stakeholder .....	251
APPENDIX IV .....	259
Tables .....	260
Table A-1: Students' Demographic Background .....	261
Table A-2: Staff's Demographic Background .....	262
Table A-3: Non-University Stakeholders' Demographic Background .....	263
Table A-4: Students' Opinion of the Business Simulation Course .....	264
Figures .....	265
Figure A: Simulations-Based Approach Versus Real-Life Approach .....	266
Figure B: Traditional Versus New Teaching Methods in Higher Education .....	267
Figure C: A Paradigm Shift from Teaching to Learning .....	268
Figure D: The Attributes of Traditional and Authentic Assessment .....	268
Figure E: The Constant Comparative Method .....	269

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## LIST OF TABLES

---

Table 2-1: Overview of some of the literature relevant to simulated learning.....	28
Table 2-2: Overview of some of the literature dealing with teaching approaches applicable to higher education in Thailand .....	31
Table 2-3: Overview of some of the literature relevant to curriculum issues related to learning in real world business contexts.....	41
Table 2-4: Overview of some of the literature relevant to authentic assessment in higher education .....	45
Table 2-5: Overview of some of the literature relevant to the transfer of learning: from theory to practice .....	47
Table 2-6: Overview of some of the literature relevant to issues in practice-based curricula.....	49
Table 2-7: Overview of some of the literature relevant to community-based learning.....	51
Table 2-8: Overview of some of the literature relevant to administration and policy study .....	58
Table 4-1: Items Related to Simulated/ Real-life Context Learning in the BSC .....	95
Table 4-2: Items Related to Combining Theory with Practise.....	111
Table 4-3: Items Related to Students' Work with the Community.....	120
Table 4-4: Items Related to Providing Advice to University .....	130
Table 4-5: Items Related to Providing Advice to Policy-makers in the Community .....	135
Table 4-6: Overview of best things about the BSC as ranked by survey respondents .....	141
Table 4-7: Overview of responses to the open-ended questions regarding the most important aspects of the BSC .....	145

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## LIST OF FIGURES

---

Figure 1-1: Study Research Questions Matched with Major Objectives .....	23
Figure 3-1: Description of sample that completed the questionnaire.....	76
Figure 3-2: Description of sample that completed the interviews.....	76
Figure 3-3: Time-line for the Research Activities.....	81

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## **GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS**

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BHERT	Business/Higher Education Round Table
BSC	Business Simulation Course at Payap University
ECA	Europe and Central Asia
MOE	Ministry of Education (Thailand)
MUA	Ministry of University Affairs
NUS	Non-University Stakeholder
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
ONEC	Office of the National Education Commission (Thailand)
OTOP	One Tambon (sub-district) One Product (Product Community)
PBL	Problem-based Learning
PDC	Payap Dummy Company
PYU	Payap University
UNESCO	The United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
WCHE	World Conference of Higher Education